

CLAIM AMENDMENTS

Please replace all prior versions of the claims with the following listing of the revised claims.

In The Claims:

1-47. (cancelled).

48. (currently amended) An expandable stent comprising:
a plurality of substantially cylindrical ring structures, wherein each ring structure extends completely around a circumference of the stent and comprises at least one unit structure; and

at least one connector member joining two of said ring structures when said stent is in an unexpanded state, said connector member being curved along a direction of a longitudinal axis of the stent and extending across a space separating adjacent ring structures, said connector member comprising a first end joined to one ring structure and a second end joined to an adjacent ring structure, wherein said at least one connector member is biodegradable along an entire length thereof between said first end and said second end and is adapted to biodegrade when said stent is in an expanded state so that said two ring structures become substantially disjoined.

49. (previously presented) The expandable stent of claim 48, wherein said at least one connector member is substantially U or V shaped.

50. (currently amended) An expandable stent comprising:
a plurality of substantially cylindrical ring structures, wherein each ring structure extends completely around a circumference of the stent and comprises at least one unit structure; and
at least one connector member joining two of said ring structures when said stent is in an unexpanded state, said connector member being elongate longer in a direction of a longitudinal axis of the stent than in a circumferential direction around the stent and

extending across a space separating adjacent ring structures, said connector member comprising a first end joined to one ring structure and a second end joined to an adjacent ring structure, wherein said at least one connector member is biodegradable along an entire length thereof between said first end and said second end and is adapted to biodegrade when said stent is in an expanded state so that said two ring structures become substantially disjoined.

51. (previously presented) The expandable stent of claim 48, wherein said at least one connector member is made of one or more of polymers, copolymers, block polymers, poly-lactic acid, poly-glycolic acid, polyglycolides, polylactides, polycaprolactones, polyglycerol sebacate, polycarbonates, polyethylene oxide, polybutylene terephthalate, polydioxanones, hybrids, composites, collagen matrices with growth modulators, proteoglycans, glycosaminoglycans, vacuum formed small intestinal submucosa, fibers, chitin, and dextran.

52. (previously presented) The expandable stent of claim 48, wherein said at least one connector member is adapted to biodegrade within thirty days to one-hundred eighty days after said stent is expanded.

53. (previously presented) The expandable stent of claim 48, wherein said at least one connector member comprises a multitude of layers each having varying degradation rates.

54. (previously presented) The expandable stent of claim 48, wherein said at least one connector member comprises one layer having a substantially uniform degradation rate.

55. (previously presented) The expandable stent of claim 48, wherein said ring structures comprise a non-biodegradable base material and one or more biodegradable coating layers.

56. (previously presented) The expandable stent of claim 48, wherein said ring structures comprise a base material made of a combination of non-biodegradable materials and biodegradable polymers.

57. (previously presented) The expandable stent of claim 48, wherein said at least one connector member is flexible prior to the stent being expanded.

58. (previously presented) The expandable stent of claim 48, wherein said at least one unit structure comprises a plurality of strut members and a plurality of bends, said strut members and bends forming a substantially zig-zag pattern.

59. (previously presented) The expandable stent of claim 58, wherein said first end is connected to one of said plurality of bends of said one ring structure and said second end is connected to another of said plurality of bends of said adjacent ring structure.

60. (previously presented) The expandable stent of claim 48, wherein when said stent is in an unexpanded state there are two or more connector members joining said two ring structures and adjacent connector members are circumferentially aligned.

61. (previously presented) The expandable stent of claim 48, wherein said at least one connector member is adapted to biodegrade within thirty days to one-hundred eighty days after said stent is expanded, said at least one connector member is flexible prior to the stent being expanded, said at least one unit structure comprises a plurality of strut members and a plurality of bends, said strut members and bends forming a substantially zig-zag pattern, said first end is connected to one of said plurality of bends of said one ring structure and said second end is connected to another of said plurality of bends of said adjacent ring structure, and when said stent is in an unexpanded state there are two or more connector members joining said two ring structures and adjacent connector members are circumferentially aligned.

62. (previously presented) The expandable stent of claim 50, wherein said at least one connector member is curved.

63. (previously presented) The expandable stent of claim 62, wherein said at least one connector member is substantially U or V shaped.

64. (previously presented) The expandable stent of claim 50, wherein said at least one connector member is straight.

65. (previously presented) The expandable stent of claim 50, wherein said at least one connector member is made of one or more of polymers, copolymers, block polymers, poly-lactic acid, poly-glycolic acid, polyglycolides, polylactides, polycaprolactones, polyglycerol sebacate, polycarbonates, polyethylene oxide, polybutylene terephthalate, polydioxanones, hybrids, composites, collagen matrices with growth modulators, proteoglycans, glycosaminoglycans, vacuum formed small intestinal submucosa, fibers, chitin, and dextran.

66. (previously presented) The expandable stent of claim 50, wherein said at least one connector member is adapted to biodegrade within thirty days to one-hundred eighty days after said stent is expanded.

67. (previously presented) The expandable stent of claim 50, wherein said at least one connector member comprises a multitude of layers each having varying degradation rates.

68. (previously presented) The expandable stent of claim 50, wherein said at least one connector member comprises one layer having a substantially uniform degradation rate.

69. (previously presented) The expandable stent of claim 50, wherein said ring structures comprise a non-biodegradable base material and one or more biodegradable coating layers.

70. (previously presented) The expandable stent of claim 50, wherein said ring structures comprise a base material made of a combination of non-biodegradable materials and biodegradable polymers.

71. (previously presented) The expandable stent of claim 50, wherein said at least one connector member is flexible prior to the stent being expanded.

72. (previously presented) The expandable stent of claim 50, wherein said at least one unit structure comprises a plurality of strut members and a plurality of bends, said strut members and bends forming a substantially zig-zag pattern.

73. (previously presented) The expandable stent of claim 72, wherein said first end is connected to one of said plurality of bends of said one ring structure and said second end is connected to another of said plurality of bends of said adjacent ring structure.

74. (previously presented) The expandable stent of claim 50, wherein when said stent is in an unexpanded state there are two or more connector members joining said two ring structures and adjacent connector members are circumferentially aligned.

75. (previously presented) The expandable stent of claim 50, wherein said at least one connector member is straight, said at least one connector member is adapted to biodegrade within thirty days to one-hundred eighty days after said stent is expanded, said at least one connector member is flexible prior to the stent being expanded, said at least one unit structure comprises a plurality of strut members and a plurality of bends, said strut members and bends forming a substantially zig-zag pattern, said first end is connected to one of said plurality of bends of said one ring structure and said second

end is connected to another of said plurality of bends of said adjacent ring structure, and when said stent is in an unexpanded state there are two or more connector members joining said two ring structures and adjacent connector members are circumferentially aligned.

76. (previously presented) The expandable stent of claim 50, wherein said at least one connector member is curved, said at least one connector member is adapted to biodegrade within thirty days to one-hundred eighty days after said stent is expanded, said at least one connector member is flexible prior to the stent being expanded, said at least one unit structure comprises a plurality of strut members and a plurality of bends, said strut members and bends forming a substantially zig-zag pattern, said first end is connected to one of said plurality of bends of said one ring structure and said second end is connected to another of said plurality of bends of said adjacent ring structure, and when said stent is in an unexpanded state there are two or more connector members joining said two ring structures and adjacent connector members are circumferentially aligned.